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WASHINGTON

Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, D-N.Y., vice chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, today voiced concern that the CIA may not be complying with a congressional ban on U.S. support for efforts to overthrow Nicaragua's Marxist regime.

"It's coming to a crisis," Moynihan said, urging that ⁺top Reagan administration officials be called to testify under oath before Senate and House committees on the extent of U.S. covert activities in Central America.

Nicaraguan officials have charged that the United States is supporting rebel forces fighting against the Managua government.

An amendment approved by Congress last December as part of an omnibus appropriations bill prohibits American support to paramilitary groups for the purpose of overthrowing the Nicaraguan government.

In closed-door briefings for the Senate and House intelligence committees, CIA officials are said to have given assurances that the agency's support for paramilitary groups was only for limited purposes, such as interdiction of arms being funneled to leftist guerrillas in El Salvador.

But Moynihan said in an interview: "We find the agency briefings describe events ... which we cannot see as being in compliance with the law, and they say, 'Oh yes, that's okay - that's just what you told us you could do.' And at some level we were saying, 'What are you talking about?'"

He added that with regard to the congressional restriction, "the most important thing at issue is not whether this is a good law or a bad law. It is that it is the law - and it is not optional to obey the law in our government."

After Congress returns from its Easter recess, Moynihan said, "the Senate Intelligence Committee will get another briefing on this very quickly."

He said he would like to see public hearings on the issue conducted by the Senate Foreign Relations and Armed Services committees.

"I believe that the responsible officials should be called before the committees of the Congress that have jurisdiction, sworn and asked to give sworn testimony as to whether or not they're in compliance with the law," Moynihan said.

Officials called to testify, he said, should include Secretary of State George P. Shultz and Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger.

"This is something for the secretary of state and the secretary of defense to explain," Moynihan said.